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## Agnew vs. the Sun

During the 1968 Presidential campaign, Spiro Agnew earned a reputation for blunt, controversial talk. In the past month, two major speeches attacking television and the press have shown the Vice President to be no uncritical admirer of U.S. news media. And last week, Agnew's sure touch for candor and controversy surfaced again when The Baltimore Sun, a nationally respected daily that once backed him warmly as governor of Maryland, charged in a front-page story that he had barred it out of spite from his 25-day trip to ten Asian countries due to begin Dec. 26.

The Sun quoted the Vice President's press secretary, Herb Thompson, as having told its Washington bureau chief, Philip Potter, that "they [the Sun] don't like Mr. Agnew and make it clear in their editorials. It hurts him. He feels he is a hometown boy, and instead of taking pride in him, it acts like it's ashamed of him. [Mr. Agnew] is not going out of his way to do something for the Sun."

There was some doubt whether the new flap was more the responsibility of the Vice President or of Thompson, a tall, 47-year-old North Carolina-born newsman who left the Associated Press in 1966 to work for the newly elected governor. Thompson insisted that simple lack of space was the reason for turning down the Sun; there was room for only ten journalists on the plane, he explained, and 30 news organizations had asked for seats. But when Potter had pressed him on the telephone as to whether there might be other reasons and reminded him of his paper's early

that he revealed what the Vice President now felt about the Sun. And though the press secretary later said he thought the telephone conversation had been private, Potter—a seasoned veteran of Washington political warfare—took it all down and printed it.

**Dixie:** Two of the scarce seats were awarded to newsmen personally approved by the Vice President: William Randolph Hearst Jr., one of whose papers competes with the Sun, and Frank van der Linden, a writer for several Southern papers characterized by the Sun as "noteworthy for their strong 'Dixie' views on civil-rights issues." (Hearst's place will be taken by one of his reporters.) The other news organizations on the plane were the three major networks, the AP, U.S. News & World Report, The Chicago Tribune, The Los Angeles Times and The New York Times. (Thompson cited



Potter: No room on the plane

The New York Times as proof that Agnew did not intend to exclude critics and pointed out that coverage by all three papers is syndicated.)

Thompson later tried to placate Potter and other disgruntled newsmen excluded from the trip by announcing he would consider chartering a special-press plane if enough journalists were interested—but at a cost of \$6,000 a man if only the original 30 applicants went along. Now even more irritated, some Washington newsmen recalled that when Vice President Lyndon Johnson wanted the press along on his trips abroad during the early '60s, he found a way for them to do so at cut rates, and Hubert Humphrey sometimes bumped aides to make room for reporters. In any event, no matter what Thompson did last week, it appeared that Spiro Agnew would manage to get all the coverage he needed—but